

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHUJA #2842/01 3040936
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 310936Z OCT 06 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7617
INFO RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 002842

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W SILSKI AND SANNEH, INR/AA
NSC FOR CHUDSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/29/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [NI](#) [ELECTIONS](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINE LOOMS LARGE

REF: A. ABUJA 2633

[1](#)B. ABUJA 2521

Classified By: Classified by Political Counselor Russell J. Hanks for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. According to USG elections partners, INEC is poised to miss the December voter registration deadline while a lack of planning for the election cycle is likely to severely damage INEC's reputation and further fuel conspiracy theories about election delays. With insufficient numbers of voter registration machines and many of the machines not functioning properly, international NGOs asked Ambassador Campbell to urge INEC Chairman Maurice Iwu to focus on preparations for an alternative registration process. Using reworked 2003 registration lists is a possibility, but INEC would need 2-3 months to update the lists and there is a danger of repeating 2003 registration problems. Political violence, while seeming to be in a lull at present, may well increase as party conventions approach at year's end. As deadlines continue to pass, the desire for free and fair elections may well be subsumed by procedural and security concerns. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) On October 30, Ambassador, Political and Economic Officers and USAID Director and officers met with representatives of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI), IFES and PACT Nigeria to discuss the campaign environment and Nigeria's progress in preparing for the 2007 elections.

[1](#)3. (C) The IFES representative painted a bleak picture of voter registration preparations and the NDI representative maintained the situation is no longer a "problem" but a "crisis." IFES called on the Ambassador and other foreign officials to meet with Independent Nigerian Electoral Commission (INEC) Chairman Maurice Iwu to urge him to focus on concrete planning and preparations for an alternative registration process. IFES noted that voter registration planning and training typically takes one year; however, INEC is attempting it in only two months. NDI reported that several political parties have expressed their desire to deploy party agents to monitor the registration sites. INEC reportedly accepts this proposal "in theory."

VOTER REGISTRATION -- LACK OF PLANNING AND MACHINES

[1](#)4. (C) Voter registration began October 25 (despite a planned October 7 start) in all 36 states (Ref. A). IFES reported, however, that only 1,000 voter registration machines have been received -- far too few for the 122,000 polling

stations. Despite hopes for more machines soon, none have yet materialized. IFES told Ambassador Campbell that at a bare minimum 33,000 machines would be needed by November 1 to meet the December 12 registration deadline. IFES expressed strong doubts that INEC could complete the registration on time. With the current 1,000 machines, IFES estimates it will take 20 months to complete the registration. Even if INEC receives the remaining 32,000 machines in time, it will need more than 57,000 machines to conduct electronic registration verification for the April elections.

15. (C) IFES also expressed concern regarding the quality of voter registration machines. Of the 1,000 machines currently in Nigeria, it is not clear how many are functioning properly. According to IFES, INEC purchased a total of 23,000 machines from an inexperienced Canadian company. The machines already received from this company are not functioning properly due to coding problems (Ref. B). (NOTE: As also reported Ref. B, a 20 billion Naira INEC check to the Canadian company for the machines allegedly bounced due to Central Bank determinations that the machines were invoiced at twice the normal cost and allegations of tendering irregularities. IFES has heard further allegations that INEC asked this same Canadian company to provide 5,000 more machines overnight, with no tender process or open competition. END NOTE.) IFES reports that machines purchased from a South African company are good; however, INEC only purchased 5,000 of these machines. An additional 5,000 machines were purchased from a Malaysian company.

16. (C) IFES told Ambassador Campbell there is no unified position within INEC on an alternative plan. That said, INEC has reworked the 2003 registration lists. While not a best case scenario, IFES reports that the lists should be "better than 2003." Even with the old lists, however, an additional 2-3 months would be needed to update the registry. NDI, however, noted that INEC contacts warned them that despite reworking the list, using the 2003 lists could result in a repeat of 2003 problems. In addition, financial difficulties remain -- the money has already been spent for the electronic machines and no funds are currently available for updating the old lists. Abuja-based international elections experts reported last week that INEC does not have sufficient funds to pay the ad hoc voter registration staff and has requested, in private, \$45 million from the international community to make up the shortfall, while publicly declaring there are no financial problems.

VOTER APATHY, SECURITY PROBLEMS AND INTIMIDATION

17. (C) IRI reported it completed an assessment of nine states, noting voter apathy, an ineffective registration process, lack of public information and security problems among the main issues. PACT said civil society NGOs are being approached for general information on registration which should be provided by INEC. NDI noted that on recent trips to registration sites, its employees were mistaken for absent INEC employees and besieged by questions. According to PACT, local NGOs are picking up the ball, but more funding is needed for advocacy, security, and issues-based information.

18. (C) IRI reported a lull in political violence, but cautioned that violence will likely increase once party convention dates are announced in late November or December. NDI cautioned that official reports of political violence may be misleading as it fears many instances are unreported. According to NDI, the Chair of the National Women's Commission was robbed at gun-point in her home. She maintains the robbers told her they were sent to kill her. She did not report the crime.

19. (C) IFES told the Ambassador that Chairman Iwu tried to intimidate international NGOs, giving them copies of articles about NGOs being thrown out of other African countries and telling them he wanted them to "be aware" and "be careful." IRI reported that political parties are concerned that their

campaign finance records will be the focus of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) attention. As well, NDI voiced concerns over INEC rules for elections monitors which require monitors to hold statements until after INEC releases its statement.

ELECTIONS ON SCHEDULE?

¶10. (C) COMMENT. While most present agreed that INEC can not meet the December 12 registration deadline, it is not clear whether the National Assembly will bail out Chairman Iwu by extending the registration timetable. One possible scenario would be to "conclude" the registration on time, but allow a period of amendments and late registrations after the first of the year. A failure to keep to the registration timetable is likely to severely damage the credibility of INEC and Chairman Iwu and to further fuel the recent proliferation of conspiracy theories.

¶11. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED. Elections will go on according to schedule only if there is political will within the INEC, the National Assembly and the Presidential villa. Those present all reported an overwhelming suspicion that President Obasanjo is deliberately drawing out the process to extend his tenure in office. As deadlines continue to pass, the desire for free and fair elections may well be subsumed by procedural and security concerns -- this may be Obasanjo's intention. END COMMENT.

CAMPBELL